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SUBJECT: Codel Biden talks Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan with
Turkish President

11. (SBU) Summary: President Gul, in a February 22 meeting with Codel Biden, focused on political realism and participation as the key to stability in Iraq. Maximalist demands were counterproductive. The surge was working. Passage of important legislation would further enhance political integration; Turkey had already reached out to offer Baghdad help across the board. Kirkuk was a potential tinderbox that should be given special status to protect all its inhabitants. Turkey will continue its efforts to bring the Pakistani and Afghan leaders together. Democracy and a modernizing political process are the best solutions to Pakistan's problems. With regard to Afghanistan, Gul preached investment in visible road, school and hospital projects in large population centers as the best way to win hearts and minds. End summary.

12. (U) Codel Biden praised the US-Turkish relationship as one of our most important. How Turkey negotiates its future as a democratic, majority Muslim country in a difficult region will be an important marker for the 21st century.

13. (U) Senator Biden focused on Iraq as the most critical problem facing the US and Turkey. In the US, there are real disagreements on how best to achieve a viable political solution that will result in a stable, functioning government and country that poses no threat to its neighbors and is not a terrorist haven. Eventually, the US will have to withdraw the bulk of its 150,000 soldiers and lower the \$15 billion/month bill for the taxpayers.

14. (U) President Gul acknowledged the negatives and mistakes, but said it was important to focus on the positives as well: all groups were participating in the political process. Had this occurred when the constitution was being drafted, it would have encountered fewer difficulties. From Turkey's standpoint, the surge is working. The challenge now is for parliament to pass certain important pieces of legislation, including the hydrocarbons law. De-Ba'athification legislation was a good step, as was the recent amnesty.

15. (SBU) According to Gul, realism is the recipe for success in Iraq. If all parties proceed rationally and inclusively, the Iraqi government will succeed. Inclusion of the Sunnis as a major pillar of the political process was key, and a success Gul personally had worked hard to help make happen. The Iraqi Kurds, by contrast, are currently pursuing a counterproductive maximalist approach.

¶16. (SBU) The next challenge is to pass the local administration law and have local elections. Gul noted that Kirkuk remains a potential tinderbox. Just as Iraq is the Middle East in miniature, so Kirkuk is Iraq in miniature. Special status is needed for this multi-ethnic city with its oil riches. Senator Hagel focused on the term "special status". Gul responded that the Kurds have tried to claim Kirkuk for their own, working to change the demographics, though historically it was not a Kurdish city. Whatever Kirkuk's original make-up, oil has changed the population mix. It is now an Iraqi melting pot. This is not about Turks and Kurds; it is about a city that could be a powder keg if not dealt with carefully, and which must attain a status to which all feel they can belong.

¶17. (SBU) Gul referred to Iran's increased influence in Iraq post-war. The two countries' long, uncontrolled border, Iranian intelligence and its Shi'a population are among Iran's advantages. Turkey's democratic, secular system, economy, and prospect of EU membership together form an attractive model for Iraq. The February 21 National Security Council (NSC) meeting, which Gul chaired, examined all aspects of relations with Iraq and concluded that Turkey should reach out to help develop Iraq in all areas. He had talked by phone with Iraqi President Talabani late February 21 and shared with him the scope of projects envisaged. Turkey must make an "extraordinary effort" to patch up wounds and gain the favor of all Iraqis.

¶18. (SBU) Senator Kerry asked for Gul's views on Pakistan and Afghanistan -- how those two countries can move forward with their mutual problems and challenges, and how Turkey can help. Kerry thanked Gul for his leadership in helping persuade all parties to participate in the Pakistani general elections. Gul recapped his efforts to bring together Presidents Karzai and Musharraf last year to start a dialogue on their contentious border problems. The effort produced a joint declaration and a mechanism for continued consultations. Prior to that, their exchanges had only been acrimonious. This process, Gul explained, is geared to helping the

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two leaders find a solution - perhaps setting up a "safe" zone along their joint border. He will invite the two leaders to Turkey again in March.

¶19. (SBU) Moving forward politically in Pakistan is a question of modernization, Gul stated. A civilian government must push the process forward by democratic means. A strong political alliance can help, as can improved education. Gul talked to the Pakistanis about modernizing their madrassas and would share Turkey's experience on education.

¶110. (SBU) On Afghanistan, Gul said that as foreign minister, he had repeatedly emphasized that armed struggle could have the opposite effect of that intended, instead strengthening opponents. Rebuilding and goodwill efforts would pay off. In Wardak province, the Turks are building hospitals, schools and other facilities. They had heard from Afghanis that the first thing the US did was to build a prison. This immediately lost us goodwill, despite billions spent. In Kabul in winter, for example, the streets are knee-deep in mud. It would cost only \$200,000 to asphalt all the streets of Kabul, and the public relations result would be priceless. Senator Biden responded that we had put down miles of paving, but he took Gul's point was that perhaps we were doing it in the wrong place: if we did it in a concentrated population center, it would be more visible.

¶111. (SBU) In response to Senator Hagel's question about how Turkey's EU accession process was proceeding, Gul thanked the Senators for unflagging US support. The integration process continues. There is a temporary bump in the road with France; President Sarkozy does not yet recognize Turkey's economic advances and Turkey's positive role in regional stability.

¶112. (U) Codel Biden has cleared this message. Wilson